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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2314
RHMFIUU/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RULSJGA/COMDT COGARD WASHDC
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUCNEXC/EXPORT CONTROL AND RELATED BORDER SECURITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ISN/ECC YWONG, ACHURCH, KCROUCH, ROWEN, EAP/MLS
DRICHELSOPH, BBLACKSHAW
CBP/INA FOR RWATT
DEPT OF ENERGY FOR NNSA TPERRY
AMEMBASSY HANOI FOR PECKSTROM
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR FOR RMOODY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETTC](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KSTC](#) [KNNP](#) [TH](#) [VN](#)

SUBJECT: EXBS: THAILAND/VIETNAM ADVISOR MONTHLY REPORTING
CABLE - FEBRUARY 2008

SUMMARY

1. (U) Advisor participated in a foreign embassy drug enforcement community trip to the northernmost land and river border crossing sites from Thailand into Burma and Laos, Feb. 11-13. Advisor visited Danang port and Lao Bao border crossing in central Vietnam, Feb. 28-29. The Washington State National Guard conducted port security training at Laem Chabang port, Feb. 4-8. In March, CBP will conduct an ISIT in Vietnam and ICE will conduct export control enforcement training in Thailand.

SITE ASSESSMENTS AND MEETINGS

2. (SBU) Advisor traveled to Chiang Rai province, Feb 11-13, to view the northernmost land and river crossings into Burma and Laos. The trip was conducted by the Royal Thai Government's (RTG) Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) for the Foreign Anti-Narcotic Community of Thailand (FANC). Approximately forty foreign law enforcement attaches participated. Part of the Golden Triangle, the area was infamous in earlier times for its role in the international opium trade. Government-sponsored alternative livelihood programs have since eradicated most of the opium production in Thailand, but narcotics are still smuggled in from across the border in Burma and Laos (mostly methamphetamine tablets produced in Burma). The area is also the entry point for goods from Yunnan province in China. Advisor visited the land border crossing at Mae Sai and the Mekong River port facility at Chiang Saen. Trade flows are currently modest, but RTG officials expect an increase in the future. To meet this demand, a new vehicle inspection facility is being constructed at Mae Sai, which includes a mobile x-ray van. The new port facility at Chaeng Saen handled 176 thousand tons of cargo in 2007 (mostly agricultural products, with little inspection).

3. (SBU) In Vietnam, Advisor and embassy Political Officer visited Danang port and the Lao Bao border crossing, Feb. 28-29. Danang port is significantly smaller than Haiphong or Ho Chi Minh City. In 2007, it handled approximately one

million tons of cargo and 27 thousand TEUs of containers. Investment is increasing in central Vietnam, however. Officials expect a corresponding increase in trade, and are planning on expanding the port accordingly. Cargo is mostly agricultural products, oil, equipment and raw materials. Customs officials said they had had some drug smuggling cases, but no weapons. Trade fraud, especially for tax avoidance, is one of their biggest challenges. Their main concern is to not restrict the flow of trade; they seldom open containers and don't have any scanning machines. Requested assistance includes container scanning machines and equipment for detecting radiation, explosives and drugs.

¶4. (U) The Lao Bao border crossing is on the main east-west highway connecting Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. The road is in good condition, and new vehicle inspection facilities and a free trade zone area are under construction. In 2006, the crossing station processed 53 thousand vehicles, 187 thousand passengers, and 127 million USD worth of cargo. In 2007, those totals increased to 55 thousand vehicles, 273 thousand passengers, and 143 million USD in cargo. Cargo consists mostly of manufactured items and commodities. The Lao Bao facility is one of the pilot project sites for the Single Step Inspection (SSI) process, an initiative of the Greater Mekong Subregion countries to help facilitate trade. Joint teams of Lao and Vietnamese officials conduct inspections at a single site, rather than having cargo and passengers undergo two separate inspections on each side of the border. Border officials expect the practice will be adopted at other crossing points. Officials said that contraband was not a big problem at this site.

TRAINING CONDUCTED

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¶5. (U) Advisor joined ICE Attache in providing opening remarks at a port security seminar at Laem Chabang port, February 4-8. The training was conducted by members of the Washington State National Guard through the US National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP). The topic of the training was emergency response, focusing on hazardous materials, explosive devices and command and control. National guard trainers possess expertise in these topics from their civilian careers. This training complements EXBS assistance and DHS/DOE programs by enhancing overall security and interagency and bilateral cooperation at Thailand's largest port.

EQUIPMENT DELIVERED

¶6. (U) None.

IMMINENT TRAINING/EQUIPMENT UPDATE

¶7. (U) US Customs and Border Protection will conduct an International Seaport Interdiction Training (ISIT) course in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, March 3-7. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement will conduct export control enforcement training in Bangkok, Thailand, March 10-14.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

¶8. (U) None.

JOHN